

A special
taste
of
Africa



Obama tops
world
news
list



Celebrating Kwanzaa



TIM WIECLAWSKI/METRO CANADA

With the help of Jaku Konbit academy students in Ottawa, Ken Campbell lights Kinara candles on a table decorated with the symbols of Kwanzaa. Each of the candles represents one of the Seven Principles of Kwanzaa. A new candle is lit for each day of the weeklong celebration from Dec. 26 to Jan. 1. Scholar and social activist Ron Karenga created Kwanzaa in 1966 as the first African-American holiday.

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**Looking
back on the
past year**

Sports pg 16

**Edmonton
highlights
from 2008**

Canada pg 6

**Snapshots
from coast
to coast**

Business pg 14

**Economic
storm may
get worse**

Cartoons pg 27

**Michael
de Adder's
top 'toons**

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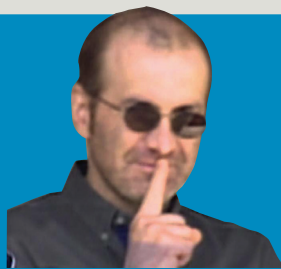
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Local



Svekla found guilty - June 4, 2008

Thomas Svekla has been found guilty of second-degree murder and committing an indignity to the body of Theresa Innes, one of the two prostitutes he was accused of killing. However, Court of Queen's Bench Judge Sterling Sanderman decided that there was not enough evidence to tie Svekla to the murder of Rachel Quinney, other than the fact he found her mutilated body.

METRO EDMONTON

Events that shaped Edmonton in '08

A snapshot look at everything from Altinger's disappearance to another Tory win

January

7th - Police in rural Alberta are monitoring a storm of hate mail that's exploded online against four teenagers who are accused of cooking a cat in a microwave.

Three separate groups have been created on Facebook calling for justice after four youths in Camrose were charged with animal cruelty and other offences in the disturbing case.

9th - Premier Ed Stelmach is taking shots against a young Alberta blogger, threatening to pursue legal action against him for purchasing the rights to the domain name "edstelmach.ca."

Edmonton blogger Dave Cournoyer, who runs a left-leaning website on provincial politics, received a letter from Stelmach's lawyers in December 2007, asking him to hand over the rights of the Internet address.

18th - More than 1,000 Edmonton-based soldiers bound for Afghanistan know the dangerous challenges that are ahead of them, a senior military leader said during an official farewell ceremony Jan. 17.

"We're tragically losing people," Lt.-Gen. Andrew Leslie told soldiers from across Alberta gathered at the Edmonton Garrison.

"But in part, it's a soldier's duty, wherever a nation sends them, to fight a good fight."

February

2nd - Amid a growing divide between urban and



Edmonton-based soldiers departed for Afghanistan on Jan. 17. There are more than 1,000 Edmonton-based troops in the region.

rural voters, Ed Stelmach is sending Albertans to the polls on the promise of eliminating health care premiums in his first test as a rookie premier.

6th - The investors behind the Edmonton Oilers have sold the team to pharmacy tycoon Daryl Katz and now it's up to the local billionaire to sell himself to the city.

Terry Bean, who represented his father's shares during eight months of negotiations, believes Katz has Edmonton and the team's best interests at heart after the billionaire

convinced all Oilers shareholders to pass him the puck as the next generation in Oilers ownership.

March

4th - The Tory dynasty has found its prince, extending its provincial reign to more than four decades while handing the Alberta Liberals an embarrassing defeat in the March 3 election.

Voters flocked to Conservative Leader Ed Stelmach's message of "Change that

works for Albertans," proving he could rebrand an aging party as a new leader.

10th - A fuel shortage at hundreds of gas stations is continuing with several other stations are expecting their pumps to run dry of gasoline and diesel sometime this week.

April

10th - A teenage girl, on her way to a central Alberta school April 3, was killed after her school bus's back

end was ripped apart in a chain-reaction collision.

A 14-year-old boy is also in critical condition in an Edmonton hospital, say Mounties. A dense morning fog blanketed the area near Rimbey, 145 kilometres southwest of Edmonton, at the time of the crash.

11th - A handful of city staffers have been caught gambling online and visiting pornographic websites at the workplace, circumventing the city's own Internet-blocking software, says the city auditor.

18th - A 77-year-old who

had just finished eating at a restaurant was killed after he was stabbed several times in broad daylight in front of a handful of shocked shoppers in the parking lot of a westend strip-mall on Stony Plain Road near 149 Street April 16.

May

9th - Afternoon traffic was clogged downtown and the air resounded with noise of honking horns as more than 150 angry cabbies circled City Hall in protest of what they see as a lack of concern for their safety.

14th - Beckham mania hit Alberta's capital like a prairie thunderstorm yesterday as England's soccer superstar thrilled more than 37,000 fans at Commonwealth Stadium.

Beckham drew an assist in a 2-1 Galaxy loss and played most of the game despite having an injured foot.

16th - The Alberta government will replace its nine regional health authorities with one large provincial body that will ensure better access to its ballooning \$13-billion health care system, says Premier Ed Stelmach.

27th - A construction worker who verbally menaced Premier Ed Stelmach, along with threatening to head to his farm to kill his cattle, apologized in a long statement posted on Facebook after being sentenced to a four-month jail term, to be served on weekends.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



Ed Stelmach

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14822 Stony Plain Rd.
(780) 443-3022

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10200 - 102 Ave.
(780) 421-4540

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Capilano Mall
(780) 450-6880
6839 - 83 St. (Argyll Rd.)
(780) 465-5271

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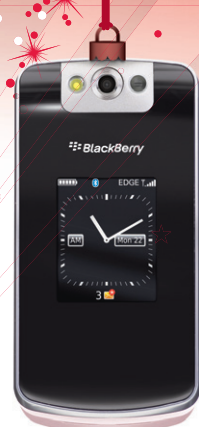
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The government is now expecting a \$2 billion surplus at the end of the year, Finance Minister Iris Evans announced in a second quarter report in November. That's far from the \$8.5 billion surplus she predicted in the first quarter when a barrel of oil was hovering around \$147 last summer. **METRO EDMONTON**

From really drunk to 'real' bodies

Top 10 Stories

From Oilers to Twitchell

1. Oilers sold to Daryl Katz
2. Stelmach wins massive majority
3. 500 migratory birds killed in Syncrude tailings pond
4. Thomas Svehkla found guilty of second-degree murder
5. City's trolley system to be scrapped by 2010
6. New Democrat Linda Duncan wins over conservative Rahim Jaffer in federal election.
7. Local filmmaker, Mark Twitchell, allegedly kills stranger, bringing a horrific script to real life
8. Falling oil prices and impact on Alberta
9. Alberta Liberal leader Kevin Taft steps down
10. Ed Stelmach announces climate strategy

June

14th - Visitors to a controversial exhibit opening at the Telus World of Science will have an educational out-of-body experience, organizers boast.

Body Worlds 1 featured 200 specimens of real human bodies and body parts, preserved in plastic.

27th - Alberta Opposition Leader Kevin Taft told reporters that he isn't a career politician when he announced he is stepping down as head of the Liberal party after suffering a major defeat at the hands of voters.

July

4th - Province-wide parties are about to face their unhappiest hour, as the government has ordered rowdy bargain drinkers to put a cork in it.

As of Aug. 1, happy hours, ultra-low drink spe-



Province-wide restrictions on cheap drinks and last call rounds bring the party to an end on July 4.

November

3rd - Friends of a local filmmaker were paralyzed with shock at police allegations that he brought a gory screenplay to life by killing a stranger he lured off the Internet under the guise of a beautiful woman. Police have yet to find 38-year-old Johnny Altinger's body, but arrested and charged a fledgling filmmaker, 29-year-old Mark Twitchell, with first-degree murder.

It's alleged that he killed Altinger in a horrific, real-life adaptation of his recently-penned psychological thriller.

24th - A space cowboy from south of the border is offering big bucks for the first found pieces of giant rocks that fell from the sky to the earth. Countless reports of fire in the sky east of Edmonton, followed by an ear-gouging sonic boom, are proof enough for meteorite man Robert Haag that the sky was falling. The space rock collector offered a cool \$10,000 for the first piece recovered from the meteor.

26th - A city police officer who was convicted of assault in July was named the best of the best.

Staff Sgt. Jamie Ewatski was handed the Kiwanis Top Cop Award at Police Headquarters for 30 years of service and 13 years of commitment to keeping kids off drugs.

December

4th - After 68 days of living on edge, Mounties arrested a person in connection with the death of 14-year-old Emily Stauffer.

Friends of the Ross Kleman, a churchgoing town employee, are shocked that he's been accused of murdering Stauffer. The pastor's daughter was killed as she walked along a wooded path in broad daylight on Sept. 27, gripping the small community in shock and fear.

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cials, and pounding back a row of drinks before last call will be a thing of the past, as new regulations to curb binge-drinking were ushered in.

16th - The last of five people to be tried in the brutal rape and murder of 13-year-old Nina Courtepatte sat expressionless in court when a Court of Queen's Bench justice ruled that she is guilty of second-degree murder and aggravated sexual assault.

30th - The new census is out and Edmonton is bursting at the seams with an influx of new citizens.

The city's population now sits at 752,412, up from 40,021 or 5.6 per cent from 2005 when the population sat at 712,391 residents.

For greater Edmonton, which includes surrounding communities, the population sat at 1.07 million people as of 2006.

August

1st - Passengers aboard a Greyhound bus from Ed-

monton to Winnipeg recounted a scene from a horrible movie when a man stabbed another rider repeatedly in the neck before cutting his head off.

Garnet Caton said he was riding directly in front of the victim that evening when the young man was sleeping with headphones on. Caton said he heard a "blood-curdling scream," and turned to find the attacker gouging at the man with a large knife.

"He must have stabbed him 50 times or 60 times," said Caton.

September

4th - Three Canadian soldiers were killed in Afghanistan when their armoured vehicle was attacked by militants, in what Canada's top general

acknowledged as a worrisome jump in direct violence.

Cpl. Andrew Grenon, 23, Pte. Chad Horn, 21, and Cpl. Michael Seggie, 21, of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry based in Shilo, Man. were killed in the attack.

October

15th - The Tory tide shifted in slightly in Edmonton-Strathcona, and Linda Duncan is waving the orange New Democrat flag high against a sea of blue.

Duncan eked out a victory over incumbent Rahim Jaffer, nailing the seat by a few hundred votes.

28th - After 108 days of searching for the person who killed a former Edmontonian, Nancy Cooper's husband was charged with her murder.



Body Works opened in Edmonton June 14.



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Canada



Newfoundland rid of label

Premier Danny Williams, left, has something to crow about as Newfoundland celebrates its diamond anniversary in Confederation in 2009. The province, a "have-not" for half a century, brings in the new year with a surplus just as it did when it joined the country.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

'08 ends on raucous political note

January

10 - Canadian communities that depend on a single industry to survive get some good news as Prime Minister Stephen Harper announces a billion-dollar package.

12 - The New Brunswick town of Bathurst is in mourning after seven teenagers, members of a school basketball team, and a teacher die as their van collides with a truck on an icy road.

16 - Canada's nuclear watchdog, Linda Keen, president of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, is fired after she accused Natural Resources Minister Gary Lunn of interference.

21 - Canada's main stock exchange, the Toronto Stock Exchange, plunges more than 600 points. More plunges will follow later in the year.

22 - Former Liberal MP John Manley and his panel recommend Canadian Forces stay in Afghanistan indefinitely.

February

19 - British Columbia is the first in North America to implement a full-fledged

carbon tax.

27 - Nortel Networks, once the darling of the stock market, sheds 2,100 more jobs and exports 1,000 more to countries with lower labour costs.

March

3 - A young Canadian man, Mohammed Kohail, gets the death sentence in Saudi Arabia after a schoolyard brawl results in the death of one person.

13 - It's official. Canada will stay in Afghanistan until 2011 after Parliament votes to extend the military mission by two years.

7 - Louise Arbour, a former Canadian Supreme Court justice, steps down from her position as UN human rights high commissioner.

29 - The Book Room in Halifax, shuts its doors for the last time after 169 years. It was Canada's oldest bookstore.

April

3 - A red cedar tree that has stood in Vancouver's Stanley Park for a thousand years loses its battle for survival when park board commissioners vote to cut the tree down after



Prime Minister Stephen Harper announces at Rideau Hall in Ottawa on Dec. 4 that Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean approved his recommendation to prorogue Parliament.

it was damaged in storm.

18 - Canada bans chemical bisphenol A, found in plastic products such as baby and water bottles.

10 - The Canadarm will still be Canadian after Industry Canada derails a plan to sell the company that owns its rights to an American defence firm for \$1.3-billion.

12 - Canada was accused of "an act of war" after the coast guard seized an anti-sealing ship owned by Sea Shepherd Conservation Society.

22 - Robert Baltovich is found not guilty of murdering his girlfriend, Elizabeth Bain, after the Toronto native served eight years in prison for a crime he didn't commit.

28 - Early warnings of the auto slowdown sees General Motors cutting 3,500 jobs in truck and SUV plants in North America, including 1,000 in Ontario's motor city Oshawa.

May

1 - You have to be at least 16 years old to have sex after the legal age is raised to 16 from 14.

13 - A student minding his own business on the ground died when a helicopter crashed down on him in Cranbrook, B.C. The three passengers on board also died.

16 - Ottawa unveils Canada's highest honour for military valour — the Canadian Victoria Cross.

17 - The Queen's eldest grandson, Peter Phillips, marries Canadian Autumn Kelly at Windsor Castle in England.

26 - Canada's titillating scandal reaches its climax with Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier's resignation over a security breach involving classified documents left in his former girlfriend's apart-

ment. But Canadians are forgiving and Bernier kept his seat in the federal election later in the year.

June

3 - General Motors closes its truck plant in Oshawa, Ont., and three other factories in North America as the auto crisis grows.

9 - A familiar tune for years is silenced after CBC loses the rights to the Hockey Night in Canada theme song to CTV as talks break down between its composer and CBC.

16 - Ottawa lists The World Tamil Movement as a terrorist organization.

17 - The rising cost of fuel prompts Air Canada to look at cutting 2,000 jobs.

19 - Frank Dunn, the former chief executive of Nortel Networks, and other senior officers charged with fraud by the RCMP.

July

1 - Protests pour in after abortion rights activist Dr. Henry Morgentaler is appointed to Order of Canada.

5 - Calgary lays claim to another big one after the biggest mosque to be built in Canada opens in the city.

7 - Steven Truscott, wrongfully convicted of the murder of a schoolmate, gets \$6.5 million as compensation from the Ontario government after he spent nearly five decades trying to clear his name.

8 - The long-time face of

the Canadian Auto Workers union announces he will step down as head of the national union.

16 - Canada's oldest company is no longer truly Canadian after New York-based NRDC Equity Partners buys Hudson's Bay Co., the second time it has changed hands in less than three years.

20 - Quebec sovereigntists are not amused with former Beatle Paul McCartney giving a free concert to mark Quebec City's 400th anniversary.

August

15 - Christopher Paul Neil, 33, of Maple Ridge, B.C., gets three years in Thai prison for sexually abusing 13-year-old boy.

18 - Low-speed electric cars cleared to move on public roads in the Victoria suburb of Oak Bay — the first municipality in Canada to legalize the vehicles.

24 - Canada wins 18 medals at the end of the Summer Olympics in Beijing.

28 - Hundreds of passengers are stranded and left to scramble to find a way home after Ottawa-based Zoom Airlines files for bankruptcy protection.

September

7 - Prime Minister Stephen Harper calls general election for Oct. 14.

25 - A 20-year-old Ontario man is convicted of conspiring to bomb Parliament Hill, RCMP headquarters and nuclear power plants.

26 - The criminal justice system failed David Milgaard, concludes a commission of inquiry. It recommends the federal government create an independent body to review wrongful conviction allegations.

October

6 - \$100 billion in value of stocks are wiped out on the Toronto Stock Exchange as falling oil prices and fears of global recession spook investors.

9 - A member of the Snowbirds aerobatic team is one of two Canadian Forces personnel killed in a jet crash in southwest Saskatchewan.

Continued on pg 9



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Cold cuts maker changes tune

When lawyers began filing class-action lawsuits against Maple Leaf Foods in August claiming thousands of people had suffered from eating listeria-tainted cold cuts, company president Michael McCain fired back.

In internal e-mail memos to staff, McCain dismissed class-action lawyers and painted some of the self-professed victims as opportunists making the "faintest, thinnest of claims of so-called emotional stress or illness (tummy ache stuff)."

That tone changed when Maple Leaf settled the class-action lawsuit with victims of the listeria outbreak, committing to pay between \$25 million and \$27 million in compensation. Under the agreement, victims of listeria-induced stomach aches stand to receive potentially thousands of dollars from the company.

"Our goal throughout

"The government says there are 20 dead. We think it's 29. And it may even be 30 or 31."

Saskatchewan-based class-action lawyer Tony Merchant

this legal process has been to negotiate a fair and early settlement so that we can obtain court approvals and promptly compensate families who were affected," McCain said in a statement.

The settlement still requires court approval in Ontario, Quebec and Saskatchewan. The Ontario approval hearing is to be heard early next year.

Ted Charney, a Toronto lawyer who represented some claimants, said the settlement came quickly thanks to co-operation on both sides.

"We had the benefit of a

very experienced group of lawyers for both the plaintiffs and for Maple Leaf and a corporate defendant who was prepared to be reasonable and make settlement its priority instead of protracted litigation."

Health officials have officially attributed 20 deaths to the listeria outbreak. But a joint Toronto newspaper and CBC investigation raised questions about whether far more deaths were missed due to a failure to conduct blood tests.

Saskatchewan-based class-action lawyer Tony Merchant, whose firm represents about 3,500 of the 5,000 claimants, says there are 29 families claiming a loved one died as a result of the outbreak.

"The government says there are 20 dead. We think it's 29. And it may even be 30 or 31. So there's a significant undercounting of people who died from listeriosis," he said.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Black days Ex-media mogul goes to jail



Former media mogul Conrad Black began serving his six and half year prison sentence in March for obstructing justice and defrauding shareholders of one-time newspaper publishing giant Hollinger International Inc.

Compensation not same for all

Members of the class-action suit against Maple Leaf Foods over tainted cold cuts will receive widely varying compensation depending on the severity of their injuries.

At the low end, listeria-triggered illnesses lasting a

day or two will be eligible for a \$750 payout.

Those who suffered illnesses lasting two weeks to a month will be entitled to \$8,000 plus any loss of income and \$750 a day for hospitalization.

Payouts of \$120,000 will

go to the estates of those whose death symptoms were consistent with listeriosis, plus funeral expenses, \$35,000 to their spouses, \$30,000 for each of their children and \$20,000 for their parents.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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CHRIS WATTE/REUTERS FILE PHOTO

Liberal leadership candidates Bob Rae, right, and Michael Ignatieff talk to reporters on Parliament Hill in Ottawa on Dec. 1. Rae stepped aside to allow Ignatieff to take over the top spot.

Sombre milestone

Continued from pg 6

October

11 - CBC's Hockey Night in Canada gets a new anthem. Canadian Gold by Colin Oberst, an elementary school teacher from Beaumont, Alta., is voted by viewers as best pick.

14 - Stephen Harper's Conservatives return to power with a strengthened minority in the federal election.

28 - Barenaked Ladies frontman Steven Page get a reprieve after a New York state judge says cocaine possession charges laid in July will be dropped if Page stays gets drug treatment

and stays clean.

29 - Momin Khawaja of Ottawa is found guilty of being part of a plot to bomb targets in Britain.

November

8 - Kidnapped CBC reporter Melissa Fung is released by Afghan insurgents after 28 days in captivity.

22 - Prime Minister Stephen

Harper signs a tentative free-trade agreement with Colombia.

27 - Harper's finance minister presents what turns out to be a turning-point mid-term economic statement — but not exactly the kind the Tories wanted. It was immediate-

ly rejected by the opposition as inadequate and partisan.

December

1 - The Liberals and the NDP, with Bloc Québécois support, agree to form coalition government if the Conservative minority government falls.

5 - Canada reaches a grim milestone in Afghanistan with the death of its 100th soldier.

4 - Parliament is suspended until late January as Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean bows to the prime minister's wishes.

9 - The Liberal party temporarily resolves its leadership issues as Michael Ignatieff remains the sole candidate to be the party's leader after rival Bob Rae withdraws from the contest.

METRO NEWS SERVICES



An honor guard carries the casket of Corp. Eric Labbe to a hearse at Canadian Forces Base in Trenton, Ont., on Jan. 9. Labbe and Warrant Officer Hani Massouh attached to 2nd Battalion, Royal 22 Regiment, died Jan. 6 when their light-armoured vehicle rolled over near Kandahar in Afghanistan. They were the first Canadian casualties of 2008 in the Afghanistan war. Canada reached a grim milestone in Afghanistan on Dec. 5 with the death of its 100th soldier.

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World



April 7, 2008

The Olympic torch is snuffed out by organizers in Paris as anti-China protests plague the global torch run. Two days later the Olympic torch is forced to be rerouted away from thousands of pro-Tibet demonstrators in San Francisco.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Obama makes American history

A rundown of world events that topped news in 2008

January

18 - U.S. President George W. Bush gives his stamp of approval on a \$100-billion stimulus package in an effort to prevent recession and control the damage caused by the housing crisis. The mess hammers banks, consumers and investors in effects that are felt all year long.

21 - Investor anxiety over prospects of a U.S. and global recession sends stock prices crashing around the globe. The Toronto Stock Exchange falls more than 600 points.

February

5 - The U.S. southern states are hammered by tornadoes killing at least 55 people.

11 - U.S. military prosecutors charge six detainees in connection with 9-11 attacks. They ask to impose the death penalty.

12 - GM Motors sets a record for largest ever loss by an automotive company by reporting a \$38.7 billion annual deficit.

17 - Kosovo declares its independence from Serbia.

19 - Cuban leader Fidel Castro ends the longest rule in the world by a head of government as he resigns as president after 49 years.

28 - In a bid to end weeks of election-related violence, rival Kenyan leaders Mwai Kibaki and Raila Odinga sign a power-sharing agreement. The clashes killed near 1,000 people.

March

7 - Louise Arbour, a former Canadian Supreme Court justice, steps down as the UN human rights high commissioner.

12 - New York state Gov. Eliot Spitzer resigns amid allegations he used taxpayer dollars for the services of a high-priced prostitution ring.

13 - The price of gold hits a record high of \$1,000.

14 - 16 people are killed in Tibet during protests against Chinese rule. The protests are led by Buddhist monks.

16 - U.S. investment bank Bear Stearns is purchased by JPMorgan Chase for a price of \$236.2 million. It is a stunning col-



U.S. President-elect Senator Barack Obama waves as he arrives on stage during his election night rally in Chicago Nov. 4, 2008.

lapse for one of the world's largest investment banks.

22 - The U.S. military death toll in Iraq reaches 4,000.

24 - The country of Bhutan holds its first ever elections and becomes the world's newest democracy.

25 - Yousuf Raza Gilani is sworn in as new prime

minister of Pakistan.

29 - The first round of results from Zimbabwe's presidential and parliamentary elections is split between President Robert Mugabe and the opposition party.

April

2 - Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern steps down as

leader.

8 - South Korea sends its first astronaut to the International Space Station in a Russian capsule.

9 - The Olympic torch is forced to be rerouted away from thousands of pro-Tibet demonstrators in San Francisco.

14 - Italian Prime Minis-

ter Silvio Berlusconi's party wins majority in the Italian elections.

15 - The U.S. welcomes Pope Benedict as he arrives in Washington for his first papal visit to America.

20 - Ending 60 years of single-party rule in Paraguay, former bishop Fernando Lugo is elected

president.

27 - The Taliban attack a military parade in Kabul, Afghanistan. President Hamid Karzai and dignitaries, including the Canadian ambassador, escape uninjured.

May

3 - More than 134,000 people are killed in southwestern Myanmar as cyclone Nargis smashes into the country.

8 - Dmitry Medvedev is sworn in as Russia's new president. Vladimir Putin is confirmed as Russia's prime minister, a day after he appoints Medvedev.

12 - Southwestern China is rocked by a massive earthquake that kills 80,000 people.

14 - The United States lists polar bears as a threatened species.

25 - The Phoenix Mars Lander lands on Mars as it begins its search for water residue on the red planet.

28 - Nepal declares itself a republic, abolishing 239-year-old monarchy.

29 - The Vatican issues a decree against ordaining women.

June

1 - Macedonian prime minister Nikola Gruevski is re-elected after a violence-marred parliamentary election.

12 - The U.S. Supreme Court rules that foreign detainees held at Guantanamo Bay have rights under the American Constitution. The ruling surrounds their right to challenge their detention in U.S. civilian courts.

12 - Negotiators from Taiwan and China open their first formal talks in almost a decade.

13 - In daring prison break, over 1,100 inmates, including 400 Taliban, escape from detention in Kandahar.

26 - U.S. President Bush announces he will remove North Korea from a terrorism blacklist after it provides a declaration of its nuclear capabilities.

27 - In a move to focus on his philanthropic efforts, Bill Gates retires from day-to-day duties at Microsoft.

RUNDOWN OF TOP WORLD NEWS
CONTINUED ON PAGE 10



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Cyclone Nargis kills 134,000 in Myanmar

A rundown of world events that topped news in 2008

June

29 - Robert Mugabe is sworn in as president of Zimbabwe. The run-off election is boycotted by the opposition and condemned by the international community.

July

2 - Fifteen hostages are freed when Colombian military agents raid a rebel group holding them in the jungle.

24 - Ford reports a \$8.7 billion second quarter loss. It is the car company's largest quarterly loss in history.

29 - The U.S. House of Representatives issues an apology to black Americans for wrongs committed against them and their ancestors ranging from slavery to segregation.

30 - GM announces a 15 per cent cut to its U.S. and Canadian salaried workforce.

31 - Imperial Tobacco and Rothmans Benson & Hedges admit to involvement in cigarette smug-

gling schemes in the 1980s and '90s. The tobacco giants agree to pay up to \$1.15 billion in fines and civilian payouts.

August

6 - Salim Hamdan, Osama bin Laden's former driver, is found guilty of terrorism. It is the first to come through the U.S. military tribunal process at Guantanamo Bay.

8 - Russian tanks roll into South Ossetia after Georgian forces attempt to recapture the region.

20 - U.S. and Poland sign a deal to place a U.S. missile defence base in Poland. Russia voices its objection and accuses the U.S. of trying to extend its military influence in the region.

September

7 - Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac are taken over by the U.S. government as it attempts to ease the financial crisis related to house price collapse.

16 - The American government is forced to provide an \$85 billion emer-



A flooded village is seen in this aerial view near an airport in Yangon on May 5, 2008, after Cyclone Nargis slammed into Myanmar's main city killing over 134,000 people.

gency loan to rescue AIG, one of the world's largest insurance companies.

October

14 - U.S. President George W. Bush announces a \$250-billion plan to buy shares in U.S. banks. It is the biggest bailout of the country's banks since the Depression.

29 - An earthquake hits southwestern Pakistan killing more than 200 people and leaving 15,000 homeless.

November

4 - Barack Obama wins the U.S. presidency in a landslide victory. He becomes the first African-American president in U.S.

history.

16 - A Saudi oil tanker is hijacked by pirates off the coast of Kenya. It is believed the tanker was carrying \$100 million in cargo.

17 - Citibank cuts 15 per cent of its workforce. 50,000 jobs are eliminated.

26 - Terrorist attacks in Mumbai leave India in

mourning. The gunmen launch attacks on tourist sites, a crowded train station and two luxury hotels killing nearly 200 people.

26 - The world's oldest person, Edna Parker, dies in Shelbyville, Ind., aged 115 years and 220 days.

December

4 - Zimbabwe declares a national emergency over a cholera epidemic and the collapse of its health-care system.

5 - O.J. Simpson is sentenced to 33 years in prison for kidnapping and robbing two sports memorabilia dealers at gunpoint in a hotel.

6 - A teenage boy is shot dead by Greek police in a district of central Athens long associated with lawlessness and drug abuse. The boy's death sparks riots across Greece for several weeks.

19 - U.S. President George W. Bush tosses a \$17.4 billion government lifeline to GM and Chrysler. The move is intended to ensure the automakers' survival and prevent another blow to his legacy.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

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Abitibi fights to get compensation for assets
Papermaker AbitibiBowater Inc. is fighting plans by Newfoundland and Labrador Premier Danny Williams to expropriate Abitibi's dams in Newfoundland, warning it will file suit under the North American Free Trade Agreement. **REUTERS**

Business



Wall Street's biggest fraud?

Money manager and former Nasdaq stock market chairman Bernard Madoff, 70, was arrested and charged on Dec. 11 with securities fraud. Prosecutors say he confessed to running up \$50 billion in losses through his Bernard L. Madoff Investment Securities firm in what would be one of Wall Street's biggest frauds.

REUTERS

EDITOR: FERMIN DESOUZA, FERMIN.DESOUZA@METRONEWS.CA

Economic tsunami swamps world

Brace yourself. As bad as 2008 was for financial turmoil from the average consumer to the mightiest of corporations — fore-

casts are for an even gloomier outlook in 2009.

It means that the average Canadian will face more financial struggles in

2009. Predictions range from 150-to -200,000 more people losing their jobs as the economic recession gets worse.

Looking back to earlier this year, there were several analysts on several TV shows in Canada and the U.S. who warned what was

likely around the corner for world economies if things didn't get fixed. Truth is the financial downturn was so overwhelming that the inevitable "R" word was a case of not if, but how soon a recession would arrive.

With financial bailouts in the trillions around the world becoming a necessity to bail out banks and the auto industry, and other industries lining up looking for assistance, where does it all end? No one knows.

As the US recession worsens almost every day, Canada will have to deal

with a weaker domestic demand from its largest client and partner. Furthermore, a very moderate growth of the economy is expected in 2009.

According to the Laurentian Bank's economic and financial outlook for 2009, interest rates in Canada should remain very low in 2009, and the Canadian dollar is expected to trade between 0.80 and 0.85 US during the year.

Laurentian stated that although the recession here is likely to be less severe than south of the border, nonetheless, Canada's labour market is showing some cracks. Total employment fell by a hefty 70,600 in November. The unem-

ployment rate edged up from 6.2 per cent to 6.3 per cent as many Canadians just threw in the towel and stopped looking for a job.

Laurentian forecasts economic activity to contract by 0.5 per cent in 2009.

Exports, imports, residential construction, and business investment are all expected to pull back. Employment should dip slightly in 2009, while the unemployment rate should increase modestly, to approximately 7 per cent. Amid economic uncertainties, households will be more prudent and ease the pedal on

spending. Where did all this disaster start? Look to the U.S., where their housing crisis, now its third year, pushed the country into a consumer-led recession officially begun in December 2007. The slump in the real estate sector also spawned a worldwide financial crisis, which grew worse in the second half of 2008, dragging the other blocks of industrialized nations into recession as well.

According to The National Bank Financial Group team of economists in Canada, the U.S. recession should last until mid-2009, that is, 18 to 20 months in all, which would make it the second longest in 80 years. **METRO NEWS SERVICES**

Credit

- The U.S. Federal Reserve has slashed its key rate from 5.25 per cent to nearly zero per cent since September 2007, but the financial crisis has generated an increase in risk premiums and a credit crunch.



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Sean Avery's tenure with the Dallas Stars came to an unceremonious end in December after making lewd remarks regarding two of his ex-girlfriends who are currently dating other NHL players. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Sports

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Attention getter

Paraguayan javelin thrower Leryn Franco became an internet sensation during the Beijing Olympics thanks in part to her side career as a fashion model and rumoured romance with Serbian tennis player Novak Djokovic. In Beijing, Franco threw 15 metres short of her personal record, finishing 51st overall. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Edmonton still yearning for the glory days

ROBIN BROWNLEE
for Metro Edmonton



The signs welcoming visitors on the outskirts of town proclaim Edmonton as the City of Champions, but both the Oilers and the Eskimos fell well short of living up to that billing in 2008.

ESKIES IN

The Eskimos at least made the playoffs after two years out of the post-season, finishing with a 10-8 record and making it to the East Division Final against the Montreal Alouettes, where their season ended in a 36-26 loss.

Along the way, the Eskies, a dismal 5-12-1 in 2007, became the first cross-over team to win a playoff game since the CFL instituted the format as they jumped from West to East and beat the Winnipeg Blue Bombers 29-21 in the East semi-final.

Receiver **Kamau Peterson** was named the CFL's Outstanding Canadian, but the big news for the Eskies came Nov. 29, when head coach Danny Maciocia announced he was giving up coaching duties



Above: Daryl Katz, left, took ownership of the Oilers in 2008. Right: Kamau Peterson was named the CFL's Outstanding Canadian.

to become general manager and director of football operations.

OILERS OUT

Despite setting a torrid pace down the stretch with a 14-5-1 record, the Oilers missed the playoffs for a second straight year after going all the way to Game 7 of the 2006 Stanley Cup final.

The Oilers established a franchise record with 346

man-games lost to injury on the way to a 41-35-6 record in a season that will be best remembered for marking a change in ownership from the Edmonton Investors Group to **Daryl Katz**, the billionaire owner of the Rexall pharmaceutical empire.

After initially being told emphatically by the EIG the Oilers weren't for sale, Katz closed the deal by paying \$200 million to

acquire the franchise and pledging as much as \$100 million toward construction of a new arena to replace aging Rexall Place.

THIS AND THAT

University of Alberta Golden Bears basketball coach **Don Horwood** announced the 2008 season, his 26th as bench boss of the Bears, will be his last ... Horwood guided the Bears to a three CIAU and



CIS national titles ... The Edmonton Rush of the National Lacrosse League missed the playoffs yet again with a 4-12 record, a season that cost GM and head coach **Paul Day** and assistant coaches **A.J. Jomha** and **Jim Milligan** their jobs ... The Edmonton Cracker-Cats com-

pleted their first year in the Golden League with a 51-37 record and made the playoffs, but talk that owner **Dan Orlich** would cease operations began as soon as the post-season was over and have not subsided with the 2009 baseball season fast approaching.

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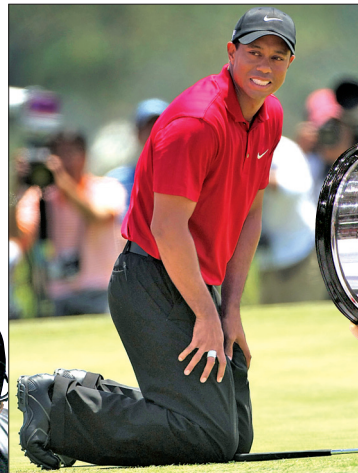


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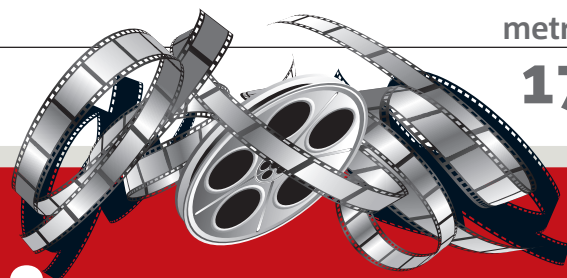


Above: Chantal Petitclerc won the Lou Marsh Trophy. Right: Christine Nesbitt has won three gold medals in World Cup Speedskating in '08.



Above: Tiger Woods rests his injured knee before winning the U.S. Open. Top: Jamaica's Usain Bolt breaks the world record in the Olympic 100m men's final. Right: Kris Draper hoists the Stanley Cup for the Red Wings.



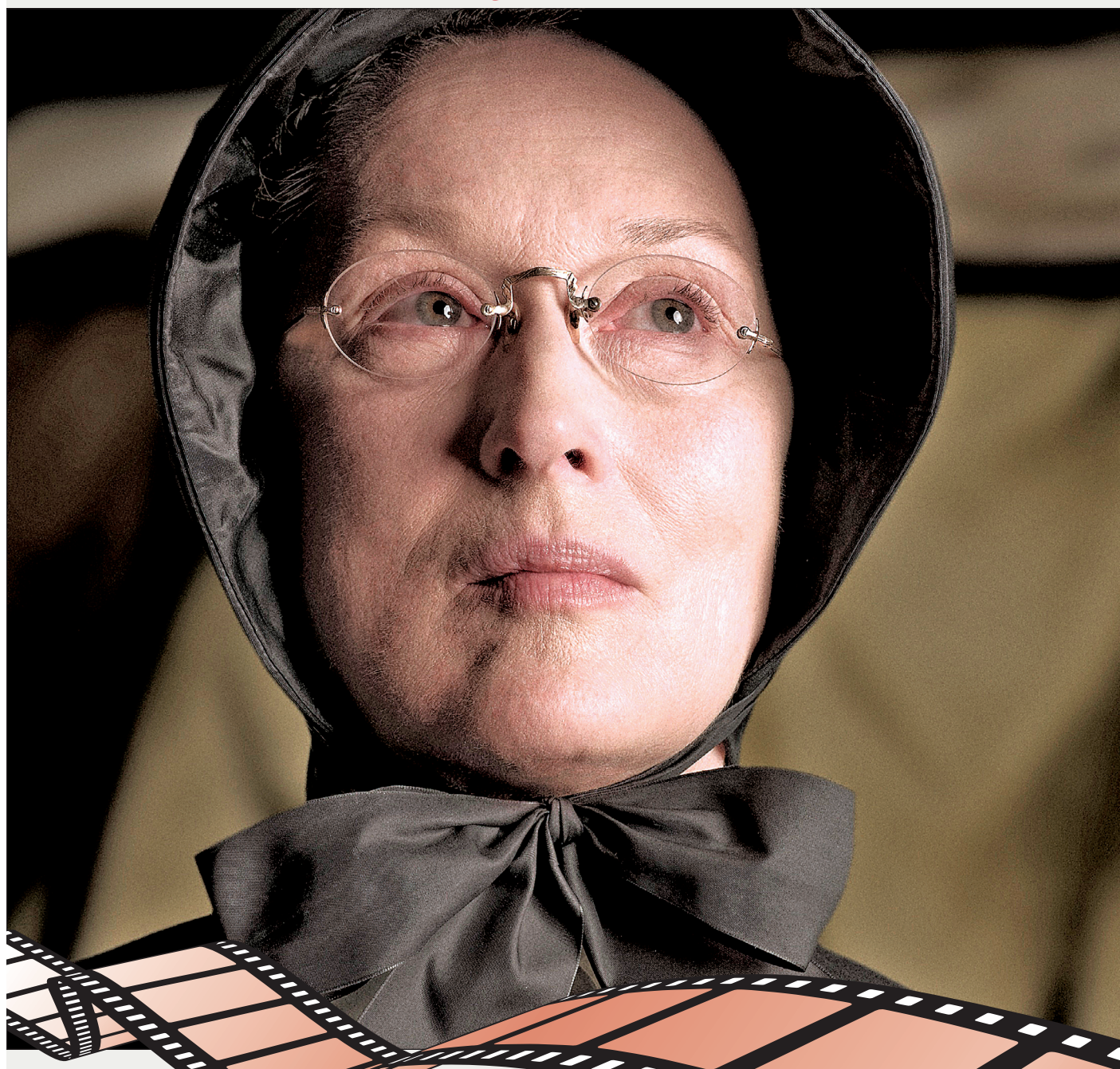


Movies & Entertainment

Movies

Moral authority

Pg 18



As the strict Sister Beauvier in new release *Doubt*, Meryl Streep is at the centre of a small but stellar ensemble cast. Throw in a Pulitzer-Prize winning play adaptation, and you're almost guaranteed stunning cinema.

Movies

Pg 21



Oscar's view of documentaries stirs up some controversy.

Music

Pg 21



Singer-songwriter Feist takes a well-earned break.

Music

Pg 22



Alan Cross suggests what to buy with Christmas money.

"POSITIVELY HILARIOUS!"

-Bonnie Laufer, TRIBUTE TV

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HEYDAY FILMS



Movies

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Marley and Me purely entertainment

Marley and Me

Director: David Frankel

Stars: Owen Wilson, Jennifer Aniston

Classification: PG

Rating: ●●●●

ROBYN YOUNG
for Metro Canada



REVIEW Get out the tissues for Marley and Me: The film version has the same tear-jerking effects as the bestselling novel.

For those not familiar with journalist John Grogan's memoir chronicling his life with beloved Golden lab Marley, nothing much happens.

It's the simple story of a family and a dog and the everyday challenges they face as they grow together.

At the opening, Owen Wilson as Grogan has just married his sweetheart Jenny (Jennifer Aniston). They move from chilly Michigan to Florida where both land staff writing jobs at competing newspapers.

Life is good as their careers take off but soon

enough, John begins to worry Jenny's biological clock might be ticking.

Quintessential-bachelor buddy Sebastian (Grey's Anatomy's Eric Dane) suggests a puppy might be enough to quench her motherly desires and John surprises Jenny with a trip to a breeder where they fall in love with "clearance puppy". Marley is the one, chubby little sausage out of the pack whose price has been knocked down for reasons that soon become clear.

He spends the next 14 years tearing apart the house, peeing on the floor, scattering dog food everywhere, chewing holes through the furniture, ripping down blinds and curtains, and generally wreaking havoc.

When John is made columnist Marley's antics provide years of fodder and the story continues, happily, with naughty but lovable Marley at the centre of it all as the couple adds three kids to their clan.

Marley and Me fits into

that rare category of flicks that exists purely for the purpose of entertainment. It stays away from gratuitous violence and nudity; there are no vulgar jokes delivered simply for shock value.

The conclusion is expected but well-directed by David Frankel (The Devil Wears Prada) and the story wraps up as a touching love story between a man and his dog and the 14 years they spend together.

Aniston's performance is predictable: She plays the same wife, girlfriend, friend she always has. But Wilson plays a charmingly domesticated version of his usual kooky characters.

Kathleen Turner appears in a semi-comical cameo that could have been left out as a strict, husky-voiced dog trainer who insists no dog is "incorrigible" as Marley is described.

And Alan Arkin (Little Miss Sunshine) is hilarious as John's hard-nosed editor and mentor, time and again delivering the best lines of the film.

No Doubt about it — stunning

Doubt

Director: John Patrick Shanley

Stars: Meryl Streep, Philip Seymour Hoffman

Classification: PG

Rating: ●●●●●

STEVE GOW
for Metro Canada



Meryl Streep and Philip Seymour Hoffman star in Doubt.



BEST ACTRESS (DRAMA): Meryl Streep (Doubt)

• Doubt has five nominations in total.

Meryl Streep could read the phone book on camera and make it compelling drama. So drop the legendary thespian in a Pulitzer Prize winning play adaptation and you're almost guaranteed stunning cinema.

Such is the case with Doubt, a slow-paced, but excellent tale about a private Catholic school under a dark shadow of wrongdoing in 1964.

Streep plays Sister Beauvier, the kind of strict principal who outlaws ballpoint pens, cough drops and dismisses Frosty the Snowman as a pagan song. After all, "He does come to life."

With one eye on her charges and the other on lenient new pastor, Father

Flynn (Philip Seymour Hoffman), she warns her staff to be diligent. When an impressionable teacher (Amy Adams) notices odd behavior between Flynn and the school's first African-American pupil, Beauvier sets out to eject the priest regardless of evidence.

Adapted from his own play, filmmaker John Patrick Shanley succeeds at creating one of the year's most intimate, character-

driven dramas ripe with tension and subtext. Rich with a moral complexity that provides a great amount of gravitas, it's the film's small, but stellar cast that circumnavigates this masterpiece.

As mentioned, Streep is stunning and should nab her 15th Oscar nomination but one cannot overlook Shanley's solid screenplay. So much for having to sit through the phone book.

On the web

• Doubt trailers, screen times and photos are available at metronews.ca/movies

"THE PERFECT FAMILY FILM!"
Mark S. Allen, CBS/CW TV

"YOU'LL LAUGH, YOU'LL CRY, YOU'LL FALL IN LOVE WITH MARLEY!"
Jake Hamilton, KHOU-TV (CBS), Houston

"WONDERFUL! PAWS-ITIVELY PERFECT!"
Kara Mack, KPTV-TV, Portland

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Kevin Steincross, KTVI-TV, St. Louis

Owen Wilson Jennifer Aniston
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BEST DIRECTOR David Fincher
BEST ACTOR (Drama) Brad Pitt
BEST SCREENPLAY Screenplay by Eric Roth and Robin Swicord
BEST ORIGINAL SCORE Alexandre Desplat

TIME
"A SPRAWLING, ENTHRALLING MOVIE."
Opens a window onto our common mortality, where the very young and the very old are similarly dependent and the years in between are a precious gift."
— Richard Corliss

ELLE
"ONE OF THE BEST MOVIES OF THE DECADE."
At once familiar and like nothing ever seen on screen before. The chemistry between Brad Pitt and Cate Blanchett is nothing short of glorious."
— Karen Durbain

Newsweek
"BRAD PITT GIVES ONE OF THE SUBTLEST, MOST TOUCHING PERFORMANCES OF HIS CAREER."
Lyrical, original, deeply felt."
— David Aisen

BRAD PITT CATE BLANCHETT

The Curious Case Of
BENJAMIN BUTTON

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Reel Time

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Movies that take you beyond the mat

InFocus

Richard Crouse

mrchaos33@hotmail.com

The great irony of good wrestling movies is that real, honest-to-God wrestlers rarely ever star in them.

This week Mickey Rourke gives a tour-de-force performance in *The Wrestler* as Randy the Ram, an over-the-hill wrestler; a once famous athlete capable of packing Madison Square Gardens, now a raggedly collection of shin splits, aching bones and broken spirit that should earn him an Oscar nod.

Aha, you say. Rourke used to be a boxer. Isn't that the same thing? Well, according to director Darren Aronofsky not so much.

"It's easy to think it was easy for Mickey to do this

because of his experience in the ring but I think it was twice as hard because he had to unlearn everything," he said." In boxing the whole game is to hide your emotions and moves.

"When you do a punch in wrestling you want people in the bleachers to see it happening three minutes before it comes. So for Mickey to ham it up like that when he was taught to move as a boxer was a real challenge."

Rourke is perfect for the role; his face looks like he's been beaten up by an angry plastic surgeon, and his slouching walk belies years of extreme physical abuse. But not all actors to play wrestling's "faces" and "heels" have been so well cast.

Flesh, a little known John Ford film from 1932, sees Wallace Beery — former silent movie and musical theater star — play a waiter-turned-wrestler who discovers his wife is having an affair.

Even stranger casting than that was spindly Henry Winkler — *The Fonz* — as an unemployed actor

who becomes a wrestling star (alongside Herve Villechaize) in the comedy *The One and Only*. Then there's *Blood & Guts* a 1978 film which sees aging wrestler Danny O'Neil, played by William Smith, wear a silver ten gallon top hat in the ring.

To get the real deal on wrestling check out *Beyond the Mat*, a documentary from comedy writer and wrestling fan Barry Blaustien. His behind the scenes look at the pro circuit and its stars works on an almost Shakespearean level, revealing the tragedy, rage, humor, violence, intrigue, hucksterism and real human stories of the sport.

It's a movie that should be placed alongside *Pumping Iron* and *When We Were Kings* as movies that uncover the private side of sports entertainment.

We all know wrestling is fake, but after seeing *Beyond the Mat* it seems a little more real.

Richard Crouse is the author of *Son of the 100 Best Movies You've Never Seen* and film critic for CTV's Canada AM.

Movie morsels



Samuel L. Jackson stars in the film adaptation of *The Spirit* comic book.

Australia

●●●●

REVIEW Australia is a beautifully filmed study of a vast land that — as one character says — has "a strange power." What director Baz Luhrmann should fret over is the drawn-out narrative that plays to melodramatic excess. Set during the outbreak of World War II, Australia features Nicole Kidman as Lady Ashley, widow of a mysteriously murdered cattle ranch owner. When confronted by her husband's rival with a takeover bid, Ashley hires a maverick stockman (Hugh Jackman) and joins him on a massive cattle drive across the outback.

Steve Gow/Metro Canada

Bedtime Stories

●●●

REVIEW *Bedtime Stories* brings Adam Sandler to Disney and the results are predictably placid. Sandler's once anarchistic comic spirit has been dulling with age and joining the Disney team feels like an appropriate crash landing for his downward trajectory. The film is far too predictable childish to appeal to the actor's core audience, coming off like the type of forgettable family comedy that would have starred Steve Guttenberg and gone straight to video 10 years ago.

Phil Brown/Metro Canada

Bolt

●●●●●

REVIEW Essentially, this tale about the unyielding loyalty of canines is as charming and heart-tugging as any Disney movie out there. Even better, the film excels in skill, depth and maturity equaling that of *Wall-E* and *Ratatouille*. Not really surprising since Pixar's brilliant chief John Lasseter is now running Disney's animation department as well.

Steve Gow/Metro Canada

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button

●●●●

REVIEW Based on a tale by F. Scott Fitzgerald, Button tells the life story of a man who is born with the physicality of an 80-year-old but mysteriously ages in reverse meeting impossible challenges along the way. If that vaguely sounds a bit Forrest Gumpish, don't be surprised — Gump's Eric Roth penned this human epic too. There's a lot of talk about Brad Pitt possibly sneaking an Oscar, and he definitely gives the best performance of his career.

Steve Gow/Metro Canada

Four Christmases

●●●●

REVIEW Vince Vaughn and Reese Witherspoon star as a professional couple who always avoid their families during the holidays. After the film's worst plot contrivance traps them in the country and broadcasts their availability to their kin, the couple — Vince-Vaughn and Reese-Witherspoon — embark on their dreaded four Christmases. Sure, this is no future Christmas classic, but it will be a movie that you won't angrily turn off when it starts airing on television during the holidays.

Phil Brown/Metro Canada

Quantum of Solace

●●●●

REVIEW The movie starts literally minutes after its predecessor, *Casino Royale*, ended, with a pre-credit car chase that sums up director Marc Forster's brisk approach to the story. Action scenes are the meat of Bond movies. Most of what we see in *Quantum of Solace* is at least as good as the standards set in previous films; relentless, and more than a bit improbable. Daniel Craig's JamesBond is still an excel-

lent incarnation of the character.

Rick McGinnis/Metro Canada

The Spirit

●●●

REVIEW Oddly enough, *The Spirit* reminds me of a cartoon version of James Bond. See, in the same sense that the British spy is an indestructible crime fighter driven largely off the insatiable appetite of women, so too is this comic book icon. In fact, replace 007's trademark martini with a glowing red tie and you might not be able to tell him apart from George Lazenby. Take that as you will.

Steve Gow/Metro Canada

Twilight

●●●

REVIEW Kristin Stewart stars as Bella, a young girl who moves to a small town and becomes instantly captivated by a classmate named Edward (Robert Pattinson) who is part of a very peculiar and insular family known as the Cullens. As Bella becomes more attracted to Edward, she discovers that the Cullens are a clan of vampires ... but very safe emo-vampires who only drink animal blood and spend of most of their time silently emoting and looking pretty rather than preying on helpless victims.

Phil Brown/Metro Canada

Valkyrie

●●●½

REVIEW There's no doubt *Valkyrie* was an ambitiously high risk project for Tom Cruise, and the truth is the film will likely struggle to fill theatre seats as it focuses on the true story of an assassination attempt on German dictator Adolph Hitler. Cruise plays Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg (Cruise), a tragically injured soldier that joins an inside gang of Nazi conspirators to eliminate Hitler.

Steve Gow/Metro Canada

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Jeffrey Lyons, NBC/REEL TALK

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Back to the Future, again

A two-disc DVD version of Back to the Future is coming out in February, Bttf.com reports. The entire trilogy is getting a DVD re-release, but the original 1985 film will come with a bonus disc containing the entire Back To The Future: The Ride. IMDB.COM

21

Screen Times

Oscar doc shortlist favours social issues

Academy's approach to the genre leaves a lot to be desired, say critics

Werner Herzog has just had his Antarctica-set documentary Encounters at the End of the World named to the Academy's documentary feature category shortlist — the list from which the five Oscar nominees will be selected in January.

But the legendary German director still isn't sure why a reporter is calling him. "The shortlist is pleasant news, but it isn't an event," he says. "My producers and distributors are enjoying it. A nomination — now, that always means something. But this is really a non-story, isn't it?"

Perhaps Herzog can afford to be blasé. He's been virtually ignored by the Academy throughout his long career, but this year, his South Pole odyssey — a personal film with an environmental conscience — may be the only picture on the 2008 Oscar documentaries shortlist to land firm-

ly on both sides of the Academy's perennial documentary divide.

It's a stereotype to say Oscar rewards documentaries that call attention to important social issues, and privileges noble intentions and left-leaning political views over cinematic craft.

But it's also a stereotype with evidence to back it up.

Of the 15 features the Academy's documentary branch members are now being asked to screen over the holiday season, about 10 could be described as social-issue films, with varying degrees of didactic intent.

Even within that category, there's tremendous variety: Fuel, a grassroots-marketed film about the biodiesel movement, has little in common with Standard Operating Procedure, 2004 Oscar winner Errol Morris' ruminative exploration of the Abu Ghraib detainee-abuse photographs. (Whatever one makes of



Republican Congressman Ron Paul is among those who speak about the United States' growing debt in the Patrick Creadon documentary I.O.U.S.A.

Morris' films, they certainly don't lack for artanship.)

Neither of those bears any similarity to Trouble the Water, a rip-roaring, rough-and-ready Sundance Award winner about a poor African-American couple surviving Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans' Lower Ninth Ward.

One can further divide the issue-oriented flicks into those that seem especial-

ly geared to the moment, in the vein of a recent Oscar winner featuring a former vice-president, and those that tackle documentary perennials like the death penalty (At the Death House Door from the Hoop Dreams (1994) team of Peter Gilbert and Steve James) or the Holocaust (Blessed Is the Match: The Life and Death of Hannah Senesh).

On this year's list, Fuel

"There seems to be this attitude that it doesn't need to be a good film if it's about an important subject — it automatically gets eight out of 10."

Paul Sturtz

was one film that seemed to come out of nowhere, but as director Josh Tickell observes, "Everybody wants to be part of the green energy movement now." Tickell's inexpensively made, microdistributed film about turning grease and other waste products into diesel fuel no longer seems like a countercultural statement.

With I.O.U.S.A., director Patrick Creadon's market timing was even more uncanny. When he started making a movie about America's debt crisis two years ago, people he talked to were baffled. "They'd tell me, 'What a dreadful topic!'" he says. "Why would you want to make that

movie?" Nobody asks those questions now.

But not everyone in the documentary world is happy to see the Oscar nomination process used as a soapbox for issues-of-the-week.

"Documentary might be the most vital form in American film right now, and the Academy consistently ignores the best work and the most important trends," says Paul Sturtz, co-director of the True/False Film Festival, a prestigious docs-only event in Columbia, Mo. "There seems to be this attitude that it doesn't need to be a good film if it's about an important subject — it automatically gets eight out of 10." **REUTERS**

It's time out for Feist

BRIAN TOWIE
brian.towie@metronews.ca

Feist is taking a well-deserved break from superstardom. After a six-year whirlwind that saw the folk singer-songwriter from Calgary rise to international fame and acclaim, Leslie Feist plans on taking at least a half-year hiatus from music, letting her voice heal and regrouping for a possible third album.

But it has been a hell of a blitz. In that time Feist released the Juno Award-winning Let It Die, which went platinum in Canada and gold in France, and The Reminder — a worldwide multi-platinum album that was both a Juno winner and Grammy nominee.

Single 1234 became ubiquitous on iPod commercials, shot to the top of many an international chart and was rated one of Time Magazine's best songs of 2007.

Add in a series of world tours, appearances on Sesame Street and The Colbert Report and you can see why a vacation might be justified.

"Six months, maybe more. I can't rightly say how long I'm going to take. Hopefully at some point my laryngitis will go away," she



Singer-songwriter Leslie Feist made a recent surprise appearance to present a high school with a MusiCounts Band Aid musical instrument grant for over \$10,000.

laughs. "I've been touring for six years and Let It Die just duck-tailed right into The Reminder, and we recorded The Reminder on tour and I just haven't stopped. I just want to see what it's like to cook and sleep in and stuff."

Yet Feist still works during her downtime, giving back to the community. She says this during a recent surprise appearance

at a Toronto high school, when the school was presented with a MusiCounts Band Aid musical instrument grant for more than \$10,000.

In the meantime, you can get your Feist fix on Stephen Colbert's holiday DVD A Colbert Christmas: The Greatest Gift Of All, where she plays an angel taking the satirical pundit's telephone call to God.

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SevenPounds-movie.ca Soundtrack on Varese Sarabande

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Soap opera legend and Dancing with the Stars favourite Lisa Rinna is reportedly thinking about posing starters for Playboy magazine. The 45-year-old mother of two told Extra she may agree to appear in the magazine. **METRO NEWS SERVICES**

Music

What to buy with that Christmas cash

If you're going to indulge, you may as well go whole hog

SoundCheck

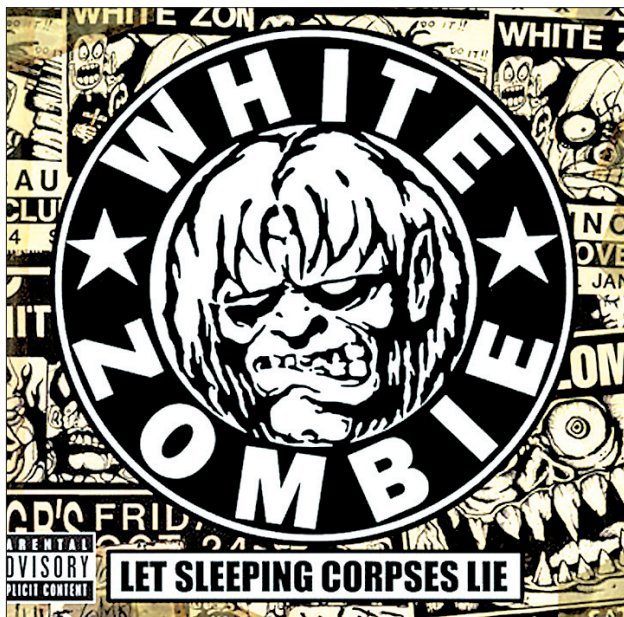
Alan Cross

alan@ongoinghistory.com

Since there's a good chance you're reading this on your way to some kind of Boxing Day sale — the Canadian version of America's Black Friday shopping orgy — it's probably a good time to offer a list of ideas of where to invest Grandma's Christmas money.

For the undead metal fan:

Although White Zombie was subsumed into leader Rob Zombie's overall ambitions back in 1996, they've been resurrected (sorry) with a box set called *Let Sleeping Corpses Lie*, featuring five discs chronicling 64 stu-



Top left, *Let Sleeping Corpses Lie*, a five-disc box set from White Zombie; middle, the 50th anniversary edition of Miles Davis' *Kind of Blue*, which includes outtakes and a version of the album on blue vinyl; top right, *The Gonzo Tapes: The Life and Work of Dr. Hunter S. Thompson*, featuring six hours' worth of his recordings; right, *ABBA: The Albums*, a nine-disc collection that includes eight studio albums plus a disc comprising B-sides and rarities

dio recordings, 10 live performances and nine videos. Expect to spend around \$70.

For the Mama Mia freak:

For the life of me, I can't understand the enduring appeal of ABBA, but with 400 million albums sold, who am I to judge? If you're late to the party,

the fastest way to catch up is with the nine-disc collection called *ABBA: The Albums*. This means all eight studio albums plus another disc filled with B-

sides and rarities. That's another \$70.

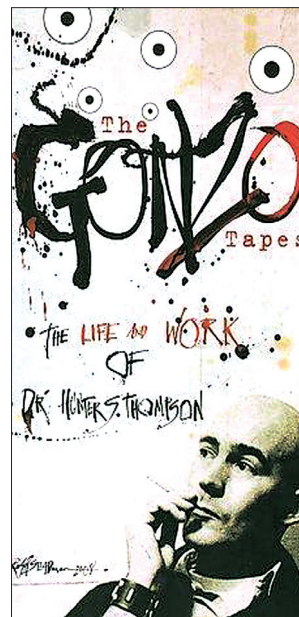
For the wannabe jazz fan:

Jazz is an acquired taste for many people, so those who want to get into the scene need to tread carefully lest they be put off by the genre's complexities and nuances.

For my money, a great place to start is Miles Davis' classic, *Kind of Blue*, the bestselling jazz record of all time. Recorded in just two sessions in the spring of 1959, its brilliance is staggering. For \$80, you get the 50th anniversary edition featuring outtakes, a version of the album on blue vinyl, a 60-page book and nearly 90 minutes of DVD footage.

For the gonzo in all of us:

Hunter S. Thompson may be gone, but while he was alive, he committed nearly everything to tape. Six hours of tequila-and-drugs stream-of-consciousness journalism is now available for \$45 on



The Gonzo Tapes: The Life and Work of Dr. Hunter S. Thompson.

For the make-believe rock star:

Guitar Hero has come out in six incarnations since it was launched in 2005, which translates to 22 million copies in the U.S. alone. Then Rock Band upped the ante by introducing microphones and drum kits, bringing families together in strange ways.

Buying all the peripheral gear can get expensive, but with competition fiercer than ever — and with some people predicting that mania over music games has peaked — this might be the best time to buy in or upgrade. Things start at about \$50.

The Ongoing History of New Music can be heard on stations across Canada. Read the daily Music Geek blog at ongoinghistory.com

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On the sixth day of Kwanzaa, Kuumba (creativity), there is a great feast or Karamu. Some favourite dishes of the Karamu are stewed snapper, Congo rice and peas, fried chicken, baked potato pie, corn bread and calaloo, jallof rice, and vegetable ital stew. **SECTION 15.CA**

Food

The basic Jollof Rice recipe (with bacon or ham in place of chicken) is identical to, and probably the origin of, a dish called Red Rice in the Southeastern United States (and usually called Spanish Rice in the rest of the continent).

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EDITOR: NINA DRAGICEVIC, NINA.DRAGICEVIC@METRONEWS.CA

Dishing up a taste of Africa

Get into the Kwanzaa spirit with a colourful chicken-and-rice entree

Kwanzaa is a unique African-American celebration with focus on the traditional African values of family, community responsibility, commerce, and self-improvement. Kwanzaa is neither political nor religious and despite some misconceptions, is not a substitute for Christmas. It is simply a time of reaffirming African-

À la carte

Barb Holland

metronews.ca/alacarte

American people, their ancestors and culture.

Kwanzaa, which means "first fruits of the harvest"

in the African language Kiswahili, has gained tremendous acceptance. Since its founding in 1966 by Dr. Maulana Karenga, Kwanzaa has come to be observed by millions of people worldwide.

When establishing Kwanzaa in 1966, Dr. Karenga included an additional "a" to the end of the spelling to reflect the difference between the



Jollof Chicken and Rice is a colourful West African dish that's often served on special occasions.

African American celebration (Kwanzaa) and the Motherland spelling (kwanza).

Kwanzaa, a seven-day celebration from Dec. 26 to Jan. 1, is based on the Nguzo Saba (seven guiding principles), one for each day of the observance.

Jollof Chicken and Rice

Food is a part of any celebration. This well-known, colourful West African dish is often served on special occasions.

I made this with par-boiled (not instant) rice, but other long grain rice should work well. I did not find ground dried shrimps. Instead, add ½ tsp (2 ml) salt to the rice. Makes 6 servings.

INGREDIENTS:

- 6 skinless, boneless chicken breasts
- 2 garlic cloves, finely minced

- 1 tsp (5 ml) dried thyme leaves
- pinch each salt and pepper
- 1 – 2 tbsp (15 -30 ml) vegetable oil
- 14 oz (398 ml) can diced tomatoes (or half a 28 oz/796 ml)
- 1 tbsp (15 ml) tomato paste
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 cups (500 ml) chicken broth
- 2 tbsp (30 ml) ground dried shrimps or crayfish (optional)
- 1-1/2 cups (375 ml) long grain rice
- 1 fresh green chilli, seeded and finely chopped
- Fresh or dried thyme, to garnish

FIRST STEP:

Rub chicken with garlic, thyme, salt and pepper. Heat 1 tbsp (15 ml) oil in a large saucepan or Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Cook chicken (in batches) until browned on

both sides; transfer to a plate, adding more oil if needed.

Add tomatoes, tomato paste and onion to pan. Cook over medium-high heat until tomatoes have thickened somewhat, about 5 minutes.

Add broth and dried shrimps, if using, and bring to a boil.

SEPARATE SAUCEPAN:

Measure out 1 cup (250 ml) tomato cooking liquid. Add enough water to make 3 cups (750 ml) and pour over rice in a separate saucepan (add salt).

Bring rice mixture to a boil, reduce heat and simmer until rice is tender and liquid is absorbed, 10 to 15 minutes. Set aside, covered to keep warm.

GREEN CHILE:

Meanwhile, add green chilli to remaining tomato cooking liquid. Add chicken to pan, covering chicken with sauce.

Simmer until chicken is cooked through, about 15 minutes.

Transfer chicken pieces to a warm serving plate, cover to keep warm.

Increase heat on sauce to high and cook until nicely thickened, about 5 minutes.

Serve chicken with rice and sauce. Garnish with thyme.

Barb Holland is a professional home economist and food writer who believes in shopping locally and in season.



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Television

Sorting the wheat from the chaff

IntelleVision

Rick McGinnis

rick.mcginis@metronews.ca

Looking back on the year in television is hindered only slightly by the fact — repeated almost monthly since I began writing this column four years ago — that I don't really watch much television at all, if I can help it.

Certainly, I don't think I could bear writing about TV daily if I had to endure a steady diet of sitcoms, police procedurals, network reality programming and news every day.

The truth is that I rarely spend much time in the single-digit and lower reaches of the double-digit dial, which probably makes me sound like the typical TV critic snob who proselytizes endlessly for

shows like *The Wire*, *Breaking Bad* and *Mad Men*.

That said, I'd be lying if I said that *Mad Men* wasn't my favourite show, both this year and last, though even as I write this, I can anticipate the word "over-rated" pattering back at me like hail on the roof of a ragtop.

For all of the critical love the show gets, it's rarely cracked two million in ratings, which pretty much guarantees cancellation on network, which might actually explain why increasingly balkanized viewers have found refuge on cable, where they might stand a chance of seeing two or even three seasons of their favourite show, or even seeing it come to a somewhat satisfying finale at its creator's behest.

You might even think that I'm a huge snob if I tell you that I'm looking forward to digesting *The Wire* at my leisure now that I have the complete



Think you had a rough year? In 2008, a TV biopic forced Metro columnist Rick McGinnis to begin thinking of Baroness Margaret Thatcher, the former British prime minister, as a hottie.

box set, and that I'm looking forward to doing the same with *Breaking Bad* when it arrives in the new

year, around the same time as the new *Battlestar Galactica* set.

Frankly, that's the way I

"You're probably going to completely write me off when I tell you that my favourite TV show all year was... (a) biopic on the young Margaret Thatcher."

end up watching most new TV these days, when I'm not downloading it from filesharing networks, or watching it on tiny 1½ by 2½ inch windows on my computer.

That's how I ended up watching most of *Architecture School*, a competition/home makeover reality show produced by the Sundance Channel, and so far unavailable on the Documentary Channel, its natural home here.

And you're probably going to completely write me off when I tell you that my favourite TV show all year was *The Long Walk To Finchley*, a 90-minute biopic on the young Margaret Thatcher I caught by chance on TVO while flipping the channels late one night.

Styled as a saucy, droll melodrama depicting the still-molten Iron Lady as a steely feminist battling the pooterish Tory party establishment to land a safe seat in parliament, it cast a palpably sexy young actress (Andrea Riseborough) as Thatcher, all husky alto, shapely legs and Bette Davis eyes.

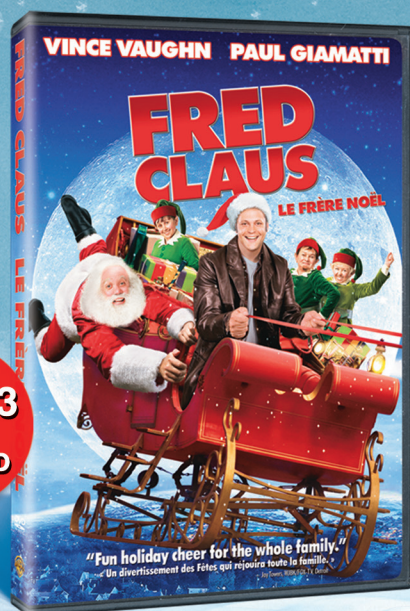
It was such a refreshing take on politics — all but unimaginable here in Canada, God knows why — and prompted an unanticipated new likelihood that I will, quite against my better judgement, be imagining Baroness Thatcher as a babe. Damn you, television!

Rick McGinnis writes about music, movies, books and television, but not opera.

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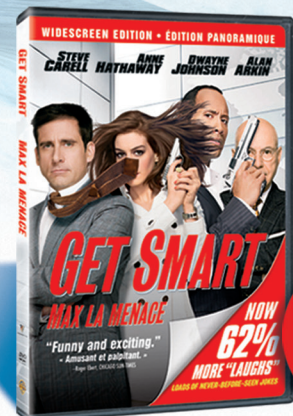


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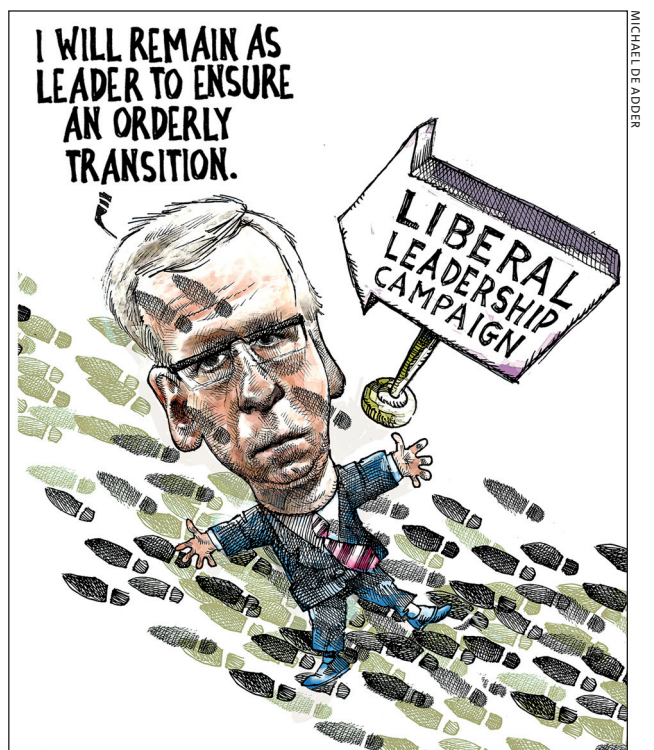
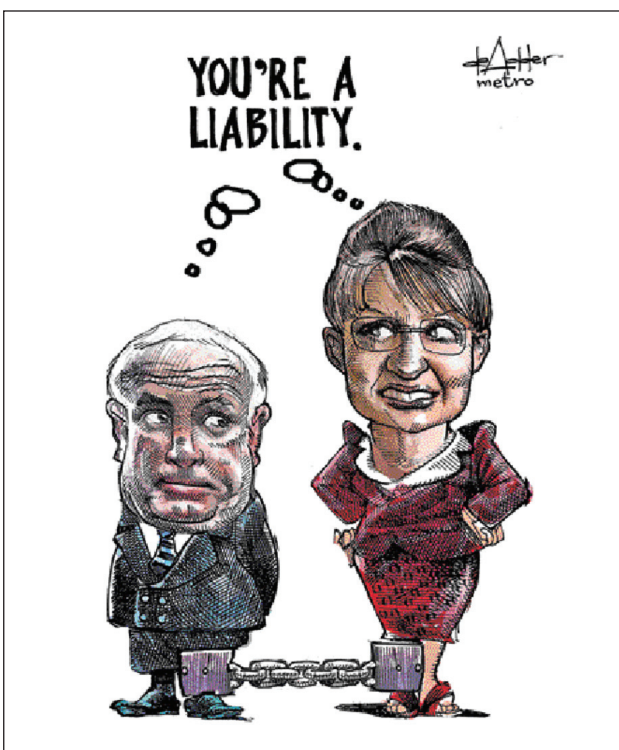
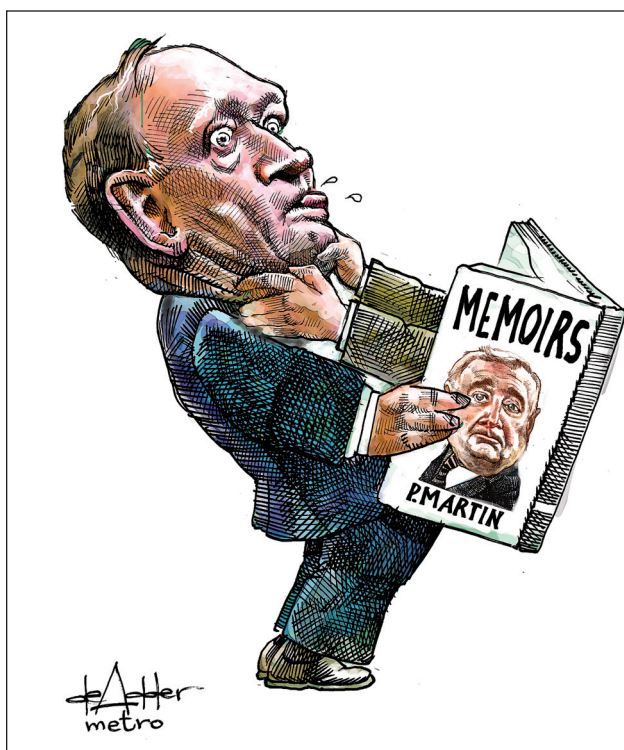
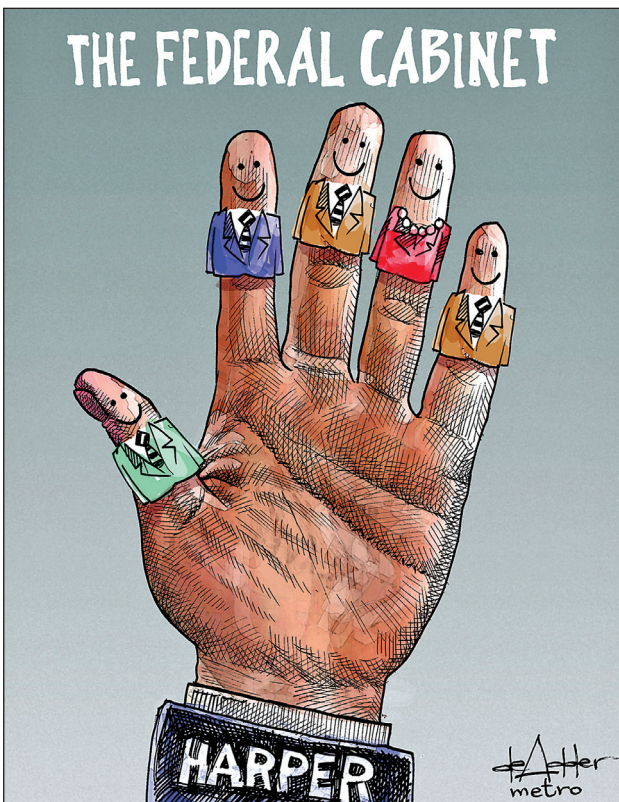
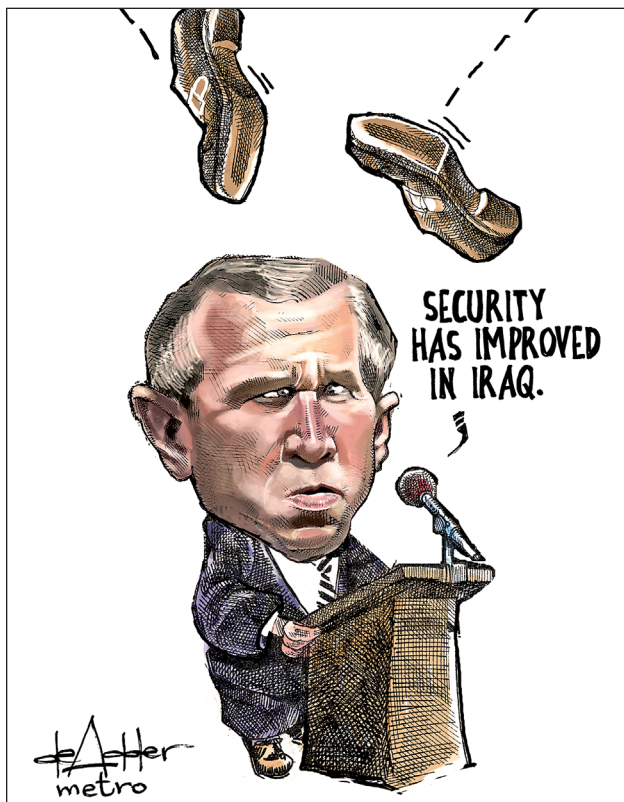
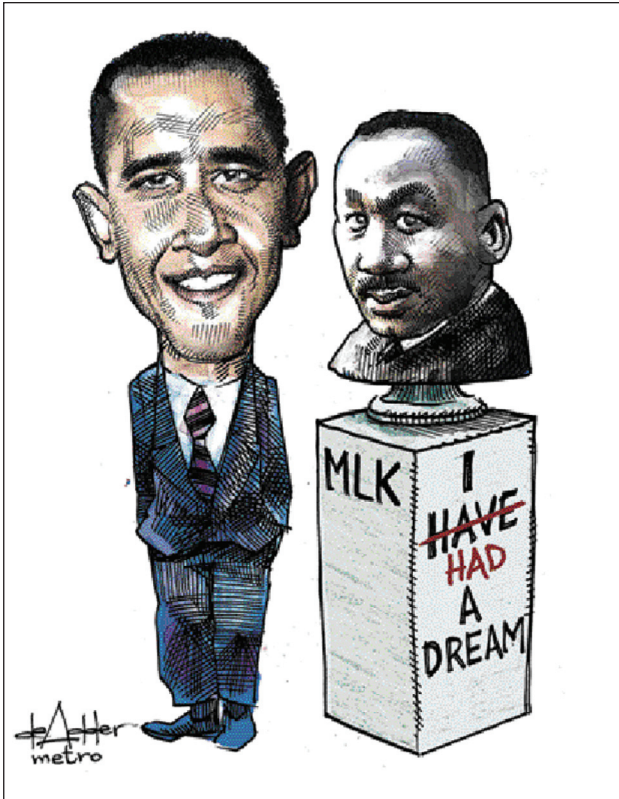
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